

Fallen Leaf Lake adding boat rentals, making marina repairs

By Kathryn Reed

While the actual road to Fallen Leaf Lake is a rougher ride than it has ever been, the operations of the community service district are smoother.

Sid Bazett, who is a part-time resident of the South Shore enclave at the edge of Desolation Wilderness off Highway 89, didn't let the fact that the docks aren't in stop him from launching his boat on a sunny Saturday afternoon.

About an hour later on April 28, the board that runs the operations of the lake met at Lake Tahoe Airport.



Sid Bazett gets an early start April 28 to the boating season at Fallen Leaf Lake. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The three board members – Tom Bacchetti, Wanda Knowacki and Stephanie Neidig – agreed to spend the money to repair the breakwater logs and launch dock.

Knowacki described a storm in early December as “unusually violent” which resulted in the damage. Emergency fixes were made to make it safe, but now a more permanent solution is needed prior to the start of the season – which is usually Memorial Day weekend.

California Land Management, the concessionaire for the Fallen Leaf Lake marina and store, is liable for the first \$5,000 per the contract. It’s estimated the district will need close to \$6,000 to complete the repairs.

John Rich, who for years was the concessionaire at the lake, will do this.

It was mentioned that the district is doing fine financially after a good year with CLM operating the concession. The money for the repairs will come out of the district’s operating budget.

CLM’s contract for another year was approved Saturday. A change is that the operator, which also runs the U.S. Forest Service owned campground at the other end of the lake, will be allowed eight slips instead of six for rental boats.

Larry Chapman, assistant director of operations for CLM, told the board, “We think we can do more business (with rentals). All the slips have not been rented in the past.”

He rents fishing boats and pontoon boats.

The board also agreed to increase the maximum horsepower allowed on the pontoons from 15 to 40. To start with Chapman is going to try using high altitude props to increase power. The reason to do this is for safety concerns because the limited horsepower isn’t enough for a boat full of people to get back to the marina on a windy afternoon.

The Fallen Leaf Protective Association is paying for a Tahoe Resource Conservation District employee to be in charge of

boat inspections Thursday-Monday, 8am-5pm from May 24-Sept. 10.

In May, CLM staff will be trained by TRCD and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency employees how to use the hot wash decontamination apparatus that is designed to keep invasive species out of Fallen Leaf Lake. Fallen Leaf, unlike Lake Tahoe, has zero invasives in it.

Chapman said the goal is to have the operations going the weekend or week before Memorial Day so locals can get their boats in the water before the masses descend.

As for the three-member board, they agreed to fill the two vacancies by appointment. They are hoping to be able to do so at the June meeting.

James Kelly, a part-time resident participating by phone, was against doing so by appointment.

"Residents are disenfranchised and we are out of the loop," Kelly said.

Board President Bacchetti said he believes the whole voting issue at the lake has been clarified, even for people whose property is on U.S. Forest Service land. The whole voting brouhaha at Fallen Leaf Lake has gone from the District Attorney level to the Attorney General's Office. Allegations of voter fraud have embroiled the district for a couple years.

At issue were people voting at Fallen Leaf Lake who voted elsewhere – which is illegal – or not claiming the lake residence as what it is.

"If you claim your domicile at Fallen Leaf Lake, the district attorney says you are able to vote," Bacchetti said. "There is a difference between a domicile and permanent residence."

The board appointments will be until the next election in November 2013.

A key reason to get people on the board soon is that four votes are needed to pass the budget.

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